

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
**Eastern Sierra & Inland Deserts Region**

**DEER ZONE X9A and ARCHERY HUNT A16**  
**Deer Hunting Information**

This information has been prepared to assist you in getting ready for your hunt after you have received a general season deer tag for Zone X9A or an A16 archery deer tag in Zone X9A. Zone X9A is located mostly within Mono County and includes small portions of the southwest corner of Inyo County, the eastern portion of Madera County, and the extreme northeast corner of Fresno County. The zone extends from approximately Bishop to Lee Vining. The zone boundaries, as described in the CALIFORNIA HUNTING REGULATIONS (MAMMALS AND FURBEARERS) are as follows:

In those portions of Fresno, Inyo, Madera and Mono counties within a line beginning at the intersection of Highway 6 and the California-Nevada state line; south along Highway 6 to its junction with Highway 395; south along Highway 395 to its junction with Highway 168; west and south along Highway 168 to the North Lake Road turnoff; west along North Lake Road and the Piute Pass Trail to the Sierra Crest (Inyo National Forest Boundary); north along the Inyo National Forest Boundary to the Deer Creek Trail; south and west along the Deer Creek Trail to the upper crossing of Deer Creek; west and south along Deer Creek to its confluence with Fish Creek; west along Fish Creek to its confluence with the middle fork of the San Joaquin River; north along the middle fork of the San Joaquin River to the junction of King Creek; west along King Creek to the junction of Ashley Creek; west along Ashley Creek to Ashley Lake; continue west along Ashley Creek to the junction of the Inyo National Forest Boundary; north along the Inyo National Forest Boundary (the crest of the Ritter Range) to the Mono-Tuolumne county line; north on the Mono-Tuolumne county line to the Virginia Lakes Trail (Entry Trail D-11); east along Virginia Lakes Trail to Virginia Lakes Road; east along Virginia Lakes Road to Highway 395; south along Highway 395 to Highway 167; east on Highway 167 to the California-Nevada state line; southeast on the California-Nevada state line to the point of beginning.

All hunters should be familiar with regulations in the current CALIFORNIA HUNTING REGULATIONS (MAMMALS AND FURBEARERS) booklet available online at the Department of Fish and Game's website: [www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/biggame/biggamehunting.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/biggame/biggamehunting.html). Laws, designed to conserve wildlife and provide an equitable distribution of game animals, are expected to encourage hunter ethics. Those who know and understand the rules can expect an enjoyable hunting experience. Articles on big game hunting and information about how to apply for deer tags may be found in the current year's BIG GAME HUNTING booklet available where hunting licenses are sold or online at [www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/biggame/biggamehunting.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/biggame/biggamehunting.html)

The majority of Zone X9A is public land administered by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Inyo National Forest, (760) 873-2408, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bishop Field Office, (760) 872-5000, and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). Some private land occurs within the zone primarily within the Long Valley, Crowley Lake, Mammoth Lakes, and June Lake areas. You must obtain written permission to hunt on private property; hunter trespass laws are strictly enforced.

Popular and well known geographical features in the zone include the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada, including the Rock Creek drainage; Mammoth Mountain and the Mammoth Lakes Basin; the Owens River, which winds its way through Long Valley to Crowley Lake; the Glass Mountains, a small,

isolated mountain range located on the north side of Long Valley; the Mono Basin and Mono Lake; the June Lake Loop, including June, Gull, Silver, and Grant Lakes; and the Conway Summit area.

U.S. Highway 395 is the primary route of access through the zone. This major north-south highway parallels the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada between the City of Bishop to the south, and the town of Lee Vining to the north. Other major highways within the zone that can be accessed from Highway 395 include 6, 203, 120, 158, and 167. These highways provide access to hundreds of improved and unimproved dirt roads that penetrate the zone's interior. Vehicle access to the west of Highway 395 and south of Mammoth Lakes is generally limited to improved roads within major drainages, such as Convict Creek, McGee Creek, and Rock Creek. However, numerous unimproved dirt roads also skirt the base of the Sierra escarpment. Generally, terrain located to the east of Highway 395 is more readily accessible by vehicle than terrain to the west; however, the pumice soils in the area are soft and fragile so hunters are required to restrict OHV travel to designated roads only.

## **OVERVIEW OF DEER DISTRIBUTION AND MOVEMENT**

Deer ranging east of the Sierra Nevada Crest in both Inyo and Mono counties (Zones X9A, X9B, X9C, and X12) are a subspecies of mule deer known as Inyo mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus inyoensis*). The Inyo mule deer can be distinguished by its large white rump patch and a tail that is black only at the tip. Deer in Zone X9A are migratory, spending summers at higher elevations (7,500-11,000 feet) along the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada and winters at lower elevations (5,000-7,500 feet) in the southeastern portion of Mono County. Deer migration between these winter and summer ranges occurs twice annually, once during spring and then again in the fall.

Migrations generally follow traditional routes oriented along major topographic features, such as drainages or the bases of mountain ranges. Spring migration from the winter range is generally triggered by the "green-up" of nutritious annual grasses and forbs. During spring migration, deer gradually move from lower to higher elevations as they forage on these emerging plants and slowly regain body condition lost over the winter. Deer arrive on the summer range by mid-May, and pregnant does begin to establish fawning territories in areas containing thick cover, adequate water, and quality forage. Fawns are born in July, and by early August they are large enough to follow the doe as she moves about her summer home range.

Fall migration back to the winter range is generally patterned by snow storms and freezing temperatures at the higher elevations. This migration generally begins in late October and follows the same traditional routes used by deer in the spring. During heavy fall snowstorms, deer will migrate together from the summer range, often making the trip to the winter range in just a few days. As the snowline lowers and the days become progressively shorter, deer concentrate on the winter range for the breeding season, which begins in mid-November. During the cold winter months, deer survive on their stored fat reserves and a subsistence diet composed mainly of a few select shrubs. Deer remain on the winter range until mid-April, after which they begin their spring migration to the higher elevations.

### **Description of Deer Habitats**

Zone X9A is an ecologically diverse zone, supporting a variety of deer habitats distributed across elevations ranging from 5,000-11,000 feet. The zone comprises winter, summer, and transition ranges; however, during the archery and general hunting seasons most deer are concentrated on the summer range. Some of the more conspicuous habitat types occupied by mule deer on the summer range include Great Basin

sagebrush, Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, Jeffrey Pine Forest, Montane Chaparral, Montane Riparian Forest, and Subalpine Conifer Forest.

Great Basin sagebrush scrub is an upland habitat type associated with the drier valley bottoms and alluvial fans occurring in Long Valley and the Mono Basin. This habitat type supports numerous shrub species that provide quality forage and cover for deer, including big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, snowberry, and mountain whitethorne. Pinyon-Juniper Woodland habitat occurs in association with Great Basin sagebrush scrub on mid-elevational deer transition and summer ranges located within in the Mono Basin and the Glass Mountains. Pinyon pine and western juniper, the dominant tree species, provide important thermal and security cover for deer. Jeffrey pine is a dry land forest habitat that dominates vegetation east of Highway 395 from the upper Owens River north to Mono Lake and east through the Glass Mountains. This forest habitat typically supports understory shrubs that provide nutritious browse for deer.

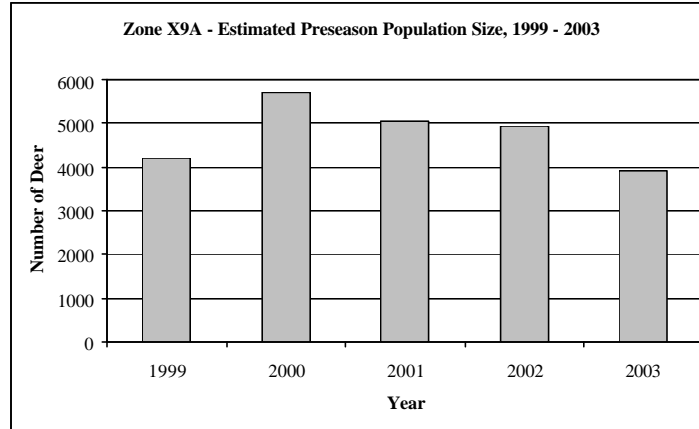
Montane chaparral habitat occurs primarily along the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada at elevations ranging from 7,000-9000 feet. This habitat type supports a variety of shrubs that provide deer with nutritious summer browse and dense concealment cover. Montane Riparian Forest is a tree dominated habitat that occurs along the many stream courses that flow east from the Sierra Nevada escarpment. Common tree species associated with riparian forest habitat include quaking aspen, lodgepole pine, black cottonwood, and Jeffrey pine. This habitat type also supports various shrubs, including willow, water birch, and gooseberry that provide important forage and cover for deer. Subalpine Conifer Forest is dominated by a mixture of evergreen tree species that occur at higher elevations of the summer range along the Sierra Nevada escarpment and in the Glass Mountains.

### **Water Distribution**

Water is generally well distributed throughout Zone X9A, especially to the west of Highway 395 along the Sierra Nevada escarpment from Tom's Place and north to Conway Summit. The numerous streams and seeps that flow from the Sierra Nevada Crest not only provide water during the warm summer months, but also support the lush forage conditions favored by deer. Conditions to the east of Highway 395 are generally much drier with water primarily isolated to the meadows and drainages that flow from the Glass Mountain Range and the upper Owens River. Along with the occasional spring or seep, stock watering tanks in Long Valley and the Mono Basin also provide important water sources for deer on the summer range.

## **DEER HERD POPULATION INFORMATION**

Two migratory deer herds, the Casa Diablo and the Round Valley herds, occupy the X9A hunt zone. In spring 2003, these two deer herds had a combined population estimate of 3,900 animals.



Herd ratios describe the age class (adult and fawn) and sex class (bucks and does) of the herd. The buck ratio is the number of bucks (spiked or greater) for every one hundred does. The Round Valley herd, which occupies the southern half of X9A from Round Valley north to Mammoth Lakes, supports a higher buck ratio (number of bucks per 100 does) than the Casa Diablo deer herd in the northern half of X9A. The table below displays buck to doe ratios for these two different deer herds. The X9A 2003 preseason population has a buck ratio of 27 bucks per 100 does, which indicates that about 16% of the population are bucks.

Buck Ratios of Round Valley and Casa Diablo Deer Herds and Zone X9A, in Number of Bucks per 100 Does, 1997 - 2003.

Year	Round Valley Deer Herd Buck Ratio	Casa Diablo Deer Herd Buck Ratio	Zone X9A Buck Ratio
1997	42	31	40
1998	39	19	35
1999	34	24	33
2000	37	23	35
2001	31	34	32
2002	31	12	27
2003	28	16	27

## HUNTING INFORMATION

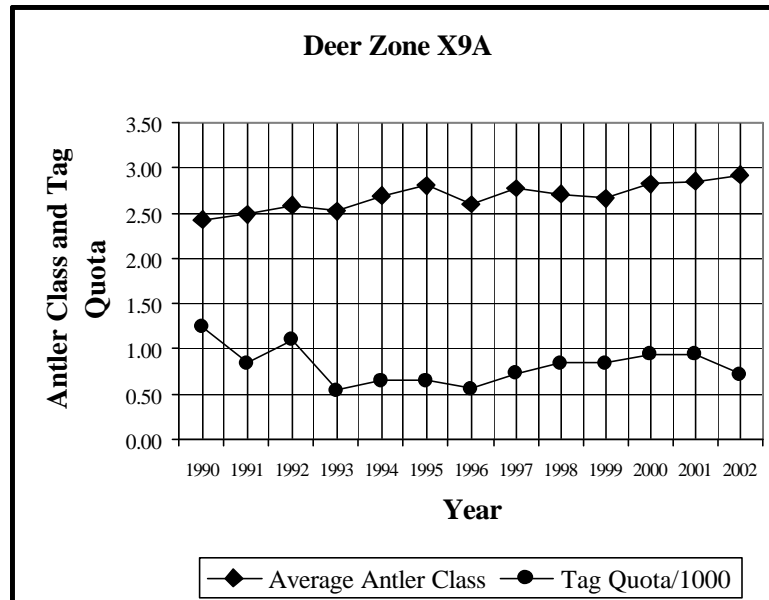
### ***Where is a good place to find bucks?***

Deer occur throughout the entire zone during the archery and general hunting seasons. However, the highest concentrations of animals generally occur to the west of Highway 395 along the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada. Deer habitat in this area is characterized by open sagebrush scrub and montane chaparral brush fields interspersed with lush meadows and groves of aspen and pine forest. Many steep drainages flow east from the Sierra Nevada Crest and these drainages typically support perennial water and lush riparian vegetation. Deer typically occur in close proximity to these riparian areas, as well as other habitats that provide adequate combinations of food, cover, and water. Specific areas to the west of Highway 395 that hunters may want to investigate include the Rock Creek drainage, McGee Mountain, Laurel Mountain, Deadman Creek, Agnew Meadows and the middle fork of the San Joaquin River, Reverse Peak, the June Lake Loop area, Parker Bench, the Parker and Walker Lake drainages, Bohler Canyon, Upper and Lower Horse Meadows, Lee Vining Canyon, Lundy Canyon, and Conway Summit, including the Jordan Basin and Copper Mountain areas. During late summer and early fall, many mature bucks can often be found above tree line, between 9,000-10,500 feet elevation, on open, sparsely vegetated, wind blown ridgelines and mountain tops. This high elevation habitat usually occurs in areas free of human disturbance; and therefore, is generally accessible only to backpackers and hunters with pack stock.

Hunters electing to hunt to the east of Highway 395 will generally find drier conditions, with habitat dominated by sagebrush scrub and Jeffrey Pine forest. Specific areas to investigate include Long Valley, Bald Mountain, the Glass Mountain Range, Sagehen Summit, and the Mono Lake Basin area.

### ***What is the average number of antler points?***

The figure below shows the average antler class of harvested buck and the tag quota by year for the general hunt in Zone X9A. Special hunts within the zone and unclassified or unreported bucks are not included. Harvest data collected by the Department over the last three years indicate that 42% of the bucks harvested in Zone X9A were forked-horns, 34% were three-pointers, 20% were four pointers, and 4% were 5 points or greater.



### ***What are my chances of filling my tag?***

The estimated percent hunter success will give you an idea of your chances to harvest a buck. The table below shows the estimated percent hunter success in all of the X zones and the statewide average over the past 10 years. In 2002, 29% of the X9A tag holders harvested a buck, and 16% of the A16 tag holders harvested a buck.

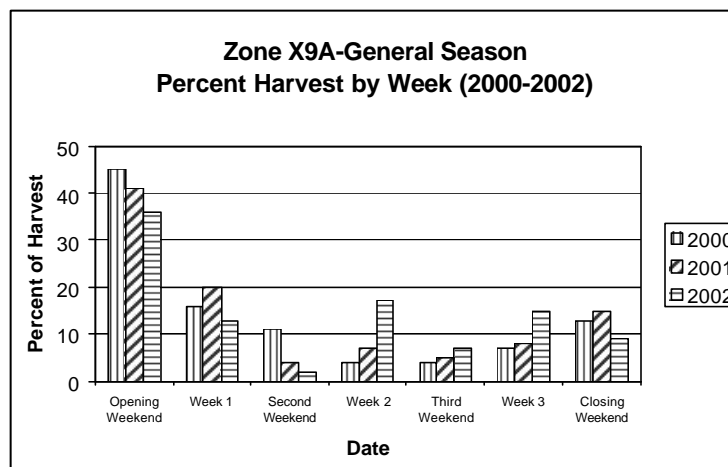
**X Zones and Statewide Average Percent Hunter Success by Year, 1993 - 2002**

Zone or Hunt	Year									
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
X9A	38	45	22	35	31	26	33	27	27	29
X9B	20	20	16	16	21	17	20	18	16	31
X9C	15	13	9	9	8	7	11	12	9	7
X12	34	39	17	30	30	29	32	29	20	16
A16 (X9A Archery)	n/a	7	4	14	9	16	12	13	9	16
A17 (X9B Archery)	n/a	0	0	3	5	0	4	0	4	0
A18 (X9C Archery)	n/a	11	0	7	0	0	27	3	12	3
A20 (X12 Archery)	n/a	15	10	14	13	16	12	14	13	9
Statewide Average*	19	22	16	22	20	18	17	21	18	17

\*Statewide average from 1993 - 1998 does not include Additional or Private Lands Management hunts.

### ***When should I go hunting?***

The graph below shows the timing and intensity of the buck harvest over the last three general seasons (2000-2002).



During each of the three years shown in the graph, a disproportionate (35% - 45%) amount of harvest occurred during the first weekend of the general season. This “higher” harvest may be attributed to the greater number of hunters in the field during opening weekend and to the higher number of bucks available to hunters during the early season. Other factors, including weather and forage conditions, water availability, moon phase, and hunting pressure may have also influenced hunter success. Hunter harvest, along with hunter pressure, generally declined during the second and third weeks of the season and then increased again during the closing weekend. Periods of cold, inclement weather during the later part of the general season can stimulate some deer to migrate from the summer range. Hunters who concentrate their efforts along migration routes leading from the summer range could increase their chance of harvesting one of these late season migrants.

## **GETTING PREPARED**

### **MAPS, TRAVEL, WEATHER, AND CAMPING**

#### **MAPS**

The enclosed X9A map was prepared to identify most of the locations mentioned in this insert. A map showing land ownership is available online at [www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/deer/deer\\_maps.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/deer/deer_maps.html). For maps with more detail, please utilize the sources mentioned in this section.

The USFS Inyo National Forest and the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area maps, the Eastern High Sierra Recreation Topo Map, and the Bishop and Benton Range BLM maps are good sources to purchase. These maps can be obtained by contacting the USFS, Inyo National Forest at (760) 873-2408, White Mountain Ranger Station at (760) 872-2500, or to order maps online visit the BLM website bookstore at [www.store.ca.blm.gov](http://www.store.ca.blm.gov). The “Northern California Atlas and Gazetteer” by DeLorme Mapping Company, available at bookstores or call (207) 846-7000 to order, provides a good, large-scale overview of roads within the zone boundaries. More detail is provided in USGS topographical maps, available at specialty stores, such as camping and hiking products retailers, or directly from the U.S. Geological Survey Distribution Center, Denver Federal Center, Building 810, Box 25286, Denver CO 80225, telephone (303) 202-4700. The Bishop, Benton Range 1:100,000-scale topographic map is a preferred choice of many outdoorsmen. Some 7.5-minute quadrangle maps for the zone include Rovana, Fish Slough, Chidago Canyon, Casa Diablo Mountain, Hammil Valley, Banner Ridge, Toms Place, Convict Lake, Bloody Mountain, Old Mammoth, Mammoth Mountain, Mount Ritter, Crystal Crag, Crestview, June Lake, Koip Peak, Mount Dana, Lundy, Whitmore Hot Springs, Dexter Canyon, Glass Mountain, Cowtrack Mountain, Indian Meadows, River Springs, Benton Hot Springs, Lee Vining, Tioga Pass, Dunderberg Peak, Negit Island, Mono Mills, and Sulphur Pond. Finally, another map that may be of value is the Rand McNally Road Atlas-United States.

#### **TRAVEL TIPS**

Zone X9A encompasses a large geographic area with topography ranging from flat in the lower elevation valleys to very steep and rocky in the higher mountains of the Sierra Nevada. Most services are located within the various towns scattered along the base of the Sierra Nevada escarpment, including Bishop, Toms Place, Mammoth Lakes, June Lake, and Lee Vining. Hunters are advised to have full gasoline tanks when entering the field and to carry snow chains, shovel, serviceable spare tire, and extra food and water. Four-wheel-drive vehicles should be used when traveling on unimproved roads within the zone. Be sure to use extra caution when driving off-road, and check with USFS or BLM regarding any vehicle travel restrictions that may be in place.

#### **WEATHER**

Warm days and cold nights with below freezing temperatures are common during the first half of the season. During the later half of the season, cool days and cold nights are the general rule with snow often developing at the higher elevations.

#### **CAMPING**

***The California Department of Fish and Game is providing this information as a service and has no control over fees and services. Please contact the appropriate agencies regarding fee information, camping restrictions, and other regulations.*** There are numerous campgrounds located on public lands within the zone, many of which are open until the end of October. However, some higher elevation campgrounds close prior to deer season. Overnight camping is not allowed on Los Angeles Department of Water and Power lands. The following provides information regarding USFS, BLM, and County

campgrounds in Zone X9A. For areas where dispersed camping is allowed, you need to obtain a California Campfire Permit for the use of any open flame (including gas stoves, lanterns, wood fires, charcoal fires, or smoking). These permits can be obtained at no cost from any Inyo National Forest Ranger Station, BLM office, or Visitor Center. Open flame of any kind may be restricted during times of high fire danger; check with the local Forest Service office for current restrictions. For reservable campsites, call the National Recreation Reservation Center at 1-877-444-6777 or visit their website at [www.reserveusa.com](http://www.reserveusa.com).

#### **U.S. FOREST SERVICE CAMPGROUNDS**

Contact the USFS, Inyo National Forest field office at 798 North Main St., Bishop, CA 93514; phone (760) 873-2408.

#### **U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT CAMPGROUNDS**

Contact the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100, Bishop, CA 93514; phone (760) 872-5000 or visit their website at [www.ca.blm.gov](http://www.ca.blm.gov) and click on Recreation Search.

#### **INYO AND MONO COUNTIES CAMPGROUNDS**

The Department of Parks and Recreation is located at the County Services Building, 785 N. Main St., Suite G, Bishop, CA 93514; phone (760)878-0272; or visit [www.395.com](http://www.395.com) for camping information in Inyo and Mono counties.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

California Department of Fish and Game, Bishop Field Office (760) 872-1171

U.S. Forest Service, Inyo National Forest (760) 873-2408

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Office (760) 872-5000

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Ridgecrest Office (760) 384-5400